



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE LAUNCHES OPERATION COMMUNITY SHIELD, ARRESTS 103 MS-13 GANG MEMBERS IN 6 MAJOR U.S. CITIES

10 MS-13 members arrested in New Jersey as part of new national crackdown

NEWARK – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced the arrest of 103 members of the violent street gang Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) here and in five other major U.S. cities as part of a new anti-gang initiative called “Operation Community Shield.”

In late February, teams of ICE special agents working with their federal, state, and local counterparts in the Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, Newark, Los Angeles, and Miami metropolitan areas, began arresting MS-13 gang members on a range of criminal and /or administrative charges.

The 103 individuals arrested to date are accused of, or have already been convicted for, a wide variety of crimes that include murder, assault, narcotics violations, re-entering the United States after deportation, and being in the United States illegally.

“We, along with our state and local law enforcement partners, recognized that this gang's presence is an immediate and real threat to public safety,” said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Kyle Hutchins, who leads the agency's investigations in New Jersey. “It's our intent with these arrests to reduce the immediate influence of MS-13. Right now we're applying both criminal and administrative immigration authorities for this. We expect that other arrests will follow as Operation Community Shield moves into the more comprehensive investigative phase.”

The MS-13 members arrested in New Jersey include:

Long Branch, New Jersey- 2 arrests:

Cesar Reyes-Flores was arrested and charged with 212(a) (6) (A) (I) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1996 (the INA), "Entry Without Inspection." Reyes-Flores is a leader of the "Long Branch Locotes Salvatrucha" clique which is part of the MS-13 within New Jersey. Reyes-Flores has a prior criminal history for possession of a weapon, terroristic threats, aggravated arson, criminal mischief, grand larceny and criminal possession of stolen property.

Alfonso Marques-Lopez, a.k.a "Santos Astacio," was arrested and charged with 212 (a)(6)(A)(I) of the INA, "Entry Without Inspection." Marques-Lopez is an associate of Reyes-Flores and a member of the "Long Branch Locotes Salvatrucha" clique.

New Brunswick, New Jersey - 3 arrests:

Noe Hernandez Herrera was arrested and charged with 212(a)(6)(A)(I) of the INA, "Entry Without Inspection." Hernandez Herrera is known as an associate member of the MS-13 criminal street gang.

Junior Argueta Mendoza, a.k.a. "Carlos Caal," was arrested and charged with 212 (a)(6)(A)(I) of the INA, "Entry Without Inspection." Argueta Mendoza has an existing deportation order that was issued by a federal immigration judge based upon Argueta Mendoza illegally entering the United States on May 15. Argueta Mendoza is an admitted MS-13 member.

Pablo Herrera Corona was apprehended and was administratively charged with 212(a)(9)(A)(ii), "Re-entry After Deportation." Herrera Corona is an admitted member of the criminal street gang MS-13.

Plainfield, New Jersey - 1 arrest:

Jose Gabriel Bonilla was federally charged March 9, 2005 for violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1326, "Criminal Re-Entry After Deportation." Bonilla had been arrested by the Plainfield, New Jersey Police Department for shoplifting. Members of the SAC Newark Violent Gang Task Force were subsequently contacted by the Plainfield Police after it was determined that Bonilla was a gang member. The task force's members determined that Bonilla is a previously deported felon.

Morris County Jail - 1 arrest:

The Violent Gang Task Force identified Hassan Machada-Angeles, a citizen of Honduras, as a member of MS-13 during Operation Community Shield. Machada-Angeles was encountered at the Morris County Jail awaiting sentencing for "Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance" and two counts of burglary. The task force determined that Machada-Angeles is present in the United States without admission or parole and lodged an ICE detainer on him to prevent him from being released. ICE has entered him into deportation proceedings.

Middlesex County Jail - 1 arrest:

The Violent Gang Task Force identified Gabriel Lujan-Median, a citizen of Honduras, as a member of MS-13 during Operation Community Shield. Lujan-Median was encountered at the Middlesex County Jail awaiting sentencing for "Possession of a Weapon" and "Failure to Appear." The task force determined that Lujan-Median is present in the United States without admission or parole and lodged an ICE detainer on him to prevent him from being released. ICE has entered him into deportation proceedings.

Union County Jail - 1 arrest:

The task force identified Juan Orellana as a member of MS-13 during Operation Community Shield. Orellana was in the Union County Jail on "Attempted Murder" charges after having been arrested by the Plainfield Police Department. The state charges on Orellana are still pending prosecution. The task force's members placed an ICE detainer for administrative charges on Orellana for "Entry Without Inspection" to prevent him from being released until he is entered into deportation proceedings.

Operation Community Shield is a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative designed to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute violent gang members and their organizations by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to ICE. Under this initiative, ICE is employing its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of assets.

This initiative also involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. ICE maintains close working relationships with all of New Jersey's law enforcement agencies and departments to ensure all members of the communities are protected through the uniformly applied, targeted criminal and administrative immigration law enforcement.

ICE will also be working through its 54 Attache offices overseas to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems, particularly those in Central America.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield is MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. The majority of MS-13 members are foreign nationals in this country illegally, making them subject to ICE's criminal and administrative immigration authorities. ICE plans to use these immigration tools to arrest, prosecute, and where appropriate, remove these individuals from the United States. ICE coordinates all deportations with the foreign nations receiving these individuals.

At the same time, many MS-13 members derive income from the sale of illegal drugs and other contraband, making them subject to ICE's counter-drug, financial, and other investigative authorities. Seizure and forfeiture of funds, property, and other illegally-derived assets will be another component of the initiative.

Over the coming months, ICE will be using all these tools in a combined fashion with the ultimate goal of crippling MS-13 organizations across the country. Ultimately, Operation Community Shield will also target other violent street gangs.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities